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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 000870

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/14/2016
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PINS](#) [PTER](#) [KISL](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: SADR CITY CAR BOMBS AND THE AFTERMATH

REF: A. BAGHDAD 850
[1](#)B. BAGHDAD 807

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR ROBERT S. FORD FOR
REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: As noted Ref A, Sadr City contacts told us March 13 and 14 that in the aftermath of the March 12 VBIED attacks that occurred in Sadr City, the Sadrist-backed Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM) has been actively patrolling the area, setting up checkpoints, and searching cars. Tensions were already high after the February 22 bombing of the Al Askiriyah Shrine in Samarra. This latest attack has only made a bad situation worse, with JAM reportedly killing Sunni Arabs in various neighborhoods in Baghdad and dumping their bodies in a landfill on the outskirts of Sadr City. End Summary.

Situation Already Tense

[1](#)2. (C) In conversations on March 13 and 14, Sadr City District Advisory Council (DAC) chair Jawad Khadum, Sadr City DAC General Information Center (GIC) supervisor Nsaif Jassim, and POL FSN told PolOff that Jaysh al-Mahdi has been out in the streets of Sadr City in force since the March 12 VBIED attacks there. Our contacts told us the situation was already tense after the February 22 bombing of the Al Askariyah Shrine in Samarra, after which Muqtada al-Sadr announced JAM would assume control of security in Sadr City. JAM has been actively policing Sadr City since the February 22 attack, with little interference from the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF). After the March 12 attacks, they said, JAM has stepped up its security posture, increasing patrols and setting up many more checkpoints in Sadr City.

JAM to the Barricades!...

[1](#)3. (C) Shortly after four VBIEDs detonated in Sadr City on March 12, our contacts told us, JAM set up make-shift checkpoints throughout Sadr City and the Palestine Street area, just outside Sadr City. These checkpoints were set up in a haphazard fashion; sometimes only 100 meters separates one from another, according to our contacts. Our contacts told us that some checkpoints are manned by 10 JAM members, some by 50, and every car going into Sadr City is searched. Most of these JAM members appear to be teenagers, they said. Pol/FSN, whose car was stopped and searched seven times while driving home in Sadr City on March 12, told PolOff that these gun-toting teenagers seemed to enjoy the sense of power they got while searching cars.

...And On Patrol

¶4. (C) Our contacts told us that JAM has closed many streets in Sadr City; only JAM patrols may travel freely in Sadr City. According to our contacts, JAM members travel in convoys of up to ten cars, some of which are Iraqi Police (IP) cars. These patrols sometimes stop and search cars traveling in Sadr City, and do not appear to be organized, our contacts said.

Murder, Inc.

¶5. (C) Our contacts all told us that JAM is killing Sunni Arabs in various neighborhoods of Baghdad and taking their bodies to Sadr City. One contact sketched a crude map of Sadr City and showed PolOff the location of a landfill on the outskirts where many bodies have been found (ref A). Our contacts were reluctant to estimate how many bodies have been found in Sadr City, but did say that fresh ones are found every day. While none of our contacts have witnessed it firsthand, they all repeated stories they had heard about bodies of Sunni Arabs found hanging from streetlamps in Sadr City, presumably killed by Jaysh al-Mahdi.

Comment

¶6. (C) The Sadr militia has exploited local fears about

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security, and the recognized weakness of the Iraqi police, to good advantage. After announcing they would assume responsibility for security in Sadr City in the wake of the February 22 attack, the Sadrists most likely want to show the public they are making good on their promise. The March 12 attacks have provided JAM with the necessary justification to assert domination over Sadr City. This latest attempt to portray themselves as the defenders of the Shia, our contacts told us, appears to be working; Sadrism popularity has risen as a result of this, according to our contacts.
KHALILZAD